

Motives for In-service Teachers Pursuing Bachelor of Teaching Programmes

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Introduction

The Sarjanamuda Pengajaran program is an umbrella programⁱ which comprises 17 major subjects under one degree program, at OUM, the program was tailored and provided exclusively to students sponsored by the Malaysian Ministry of Educationⁱⁱ. The students of this program are in-service teachers who are below 45 years of age and do not have degree level qualification: they are qualified teachers who graduated from the Malaysian Teacher Colleges with teaching certificates in their respective subjects with the exception of the September 2011 intake which comprises teachers who are between 45 and 47 years of ageⁱⁱⁱ.

This program has been popular particular in its second round of intakes beginning 2011^{iv}. While this program has been popular and it has been running well, it has not been without its problems and there is always a need for improvement.

The objective of this paper is to explore the motivations that lie behind the primary school teachers' applying for and undertaking the SMP program after years of being in-service. We deem this piece of understanding important if the faculty is to better serve these students and motivate them to do better in their studies within this program and perhaps even beyond. This is because taking up this program would mean a great deal of sacrifices including risking their career (should they violate academic regulations), time and effort.

The SMP program has very low drop-out rate and very low disciplinary incidents (in relation to the numbers) but they still exist thus remedial steps still need to be taken. More importantly, enhancing the motivation level for this program is important particularly because it serves educators and thus will impact the younger generation of Malaysians. The Faculty of Education and Education, Open University Malaysia (henceforth 'the faculty') has run a number of studies on the students of this program but these studies have been quantitative in nature. This is a small study to discover the motives and thought of the participants pertaining to being in the SMP program at their initial entry to the program. The results of this study should be able to put us in a better position to explore the participants' motivation and concerns better.

Methodology

To better understand the motivation that leads these learners to embark on the SMP program, this paper takes the most direct approach available: by asking the SMP learners directly. More precisely, this will employ a qualitative approach which involves an open ended questionnaire which contains only four questions (see below). The open-ended questionnaire is used because it offer better chances of obtaining the participants' own thoughts and responses to the questions rather than preference of predetermined answers on a closed questionnaire. This will provide us with better insight into how the participants conceive or perceive their situation: being learners in the SMP program.

The results of the questionnaires are then analyzed for keywords that are then semantically mapped to isolate the important concepts in their answers. The keywords here are defined as the main semantic operative words around which the linking elements (grammatical, syntactical and cohesive) are placed. The concepts are also identified by the gender of the respondent of a particular questionnaire.

The findings will then be discussed in the framework of the concrete-abstract continuum: a dialogical framework that places values (or items analysed) on a notional continuum between two notional poles of more concrete (characterised by values coming from regarding the Other as present and tangible) and more abstract (characterised by values coming from regarding the Other as generalized) (see D'Cruz and Steele 2000).

Findings

This section discussed the findings we gained from the questionnaires. The findings are also presented in mind map form (see below).

Breakdown

The following section numerates the number and patterns of similar answers: the number of people giving the same answers broken down by gender. The keywords here are words that form the focus of their answers. All of these key words are taken from the respondents' responses to the open questionnaire.

1. **Gender: 100 respondents: 23 males, 77 females.**

The respondents of this small study were new learners in the SMP program reading for their degree at the OUM Batu Pahat Learning Center. There was a total of 100 respondents comprising 23 male learners and 77 female learners.

2. **Age. Below 35 – 40, 35 to 40 – 53, above 40 – 2, not stated – 5.**

All of the respondents were primary school teachers employed by the Malaysian Ministry of Education and reading for their degree under the SMP program which stipulates that the learners, in the main group, must not be over the age of 45 at the time of registration. In addition, they need to have taught for a specific number of years before they are qualified to apply for the program. Thus the majority of the respondents were between 35 to 40 years old.

3. Question 1: Why did you apply for the SMP program?^v
- (a) Knowledge (Ilmu pengetahuan): 43: M9: F34.
 - (b) Professionalism: 28: F21: M7.
 - (c) Education level: 24: F17: M7.
 - (d) Dream of getting a degree: 16: F14 :M2.
 - (e) Afraid of being left behind (Takut ketinggalan): 2: F1: M1.
 - (f) Following friends (Ikut-ikut kawan): F1

More Abstract Answer	More Concrete Answer
(a) Knowledge (Ilmu pengetahuan): 43: M9: F34.	(a) Afraid of being left behind (Takut ketinggalan): 2: F1: M1.
(b) Professionalism: 28: F21: M7.	(c) Following friends (Ikut-ikut kawan): F1
(d) Education level: 24: F17: M7.	
(e) Dream of getting a degree: 16: F14 :M2.	

Discussion

The findings for the first questions shows a great predominance for the more abstract reason for applying as compared to the more concrete reasons but in terms of number of reasons and in terms of the number of respondents giving the answer. The abstract items here are identified by items that refer to intangible things that the person gains for himself and/or motivations that come from the person's desires, in comparison to the more concrete items that refer to responses that the person has in relation to the action of others: for example, being left behind by others and foing something because one's company is doing it and not on one's own motivation. This shows that the respondents employ and respond to more concrete resons for their choice of answers in the questionnaire.

4. Question 2: Are you ready to face the SMP program?^{vi}
- (a) Yes, I am prepared: 63:F46: M17.
 - (b) Not entirely: 5: M3: F2.
 - (c) Willing (sanggup): F2.
 - (d) Will be forced to get ready: F1.
 - (e) Not certain: F2.
 - (f) Feeling pressured (tertekan): F1.

More Abstract Answer	More Concrete Answer
(a) Yes, I am prepared: 63:F46: M17.	(a) Will be forced to get ready: F1.
(b) Willing (sanggup): F2.	(c) Feeling pressured (tertekan): F1.
(d) Not certain: F2..	

Discussion

The answers for the second question also reveal an overwhelming predominance for abstract answers characterised by the supremacy of the self: the 'I am in command of my situation' answer where the respondents display empowerment of the self and opposed to the more concrete answers where the outside forces are given the power to affect the person (the self) and/or exerts influence, for example pressuring, the person.

5. Question 3: What do you want from the SMP program?^{vii}

- (a) Knowledge (ilmu): 38: F33: M5.
- (b) Degree (ijazah): 28: F17: M11.
- (c) Pedagogical knowledge and skills: 16: F13: M3.
- (d) Lifelong learning skills: 3: F2: M1.
- (e) Readiness to face challenges: 3: F2: M1.
- (f) Information: F6.

More Abstract Answer	More Concrete Answer
(a) Knowledge (ilmu): 38: F33: M5.	(a) Pedagogical knowledge and skills: 16: F13: M3.
(b) Degree (ijazah): 28: F17: M11.	(c) Lifelong learning skills: 3: F2: M1.
(d)	(e) Readiness to face challenges: 3: F2: M1.
(f)	(g) Information: F6.

Discussion

The respondents' answers to the third question show that the respondents seem to share the desire to gain knowledge and the desire to own a degree in the SMP program. These are deemed of great value and quite rightly so. On the other hand, the respondents also indicate that they are concerned with the skills and knowledge that they will be using with their students, the ability to learn for life, their resilience in facing challenges and the information that they will actually gain from the course however the numbers are small in comparison to the responses for the values or “things” that they gain for themselves: the more abstract items.

6. Question 4: What do you expect to gain once you have successfully completed the SMP program?^{viii}
- (a) Better professional standing: 42: F35: M7.
 - (b) To further studies to higher level: 26: F14: M12.
 - (c) To have a degree (Ijazah): 16: F12: M4.
 - (d) Readiness to face further challenges: 3: F2: M1.
 - (e) Satisfaction: F1.
 - (f) Success (berjaya): F3.
 - (g) To struggle on (usaha lagi): M2.

More Abstract Answer	More Concrete Answer
(a) Satisfaction: F1.	(a) Better professional standing: 42: F35: M7.
(b) Success (berjaya): F3.	(c) To further studies to higher level: 26: F14: M12.
(d) To struggle on (usaha lagi): M2.	(e) To have a degree (Ijazah): 16: F12: M4.
	(f) Readiness to face further challenges: 3: F2: M1.

Discussion

The answers to the final question however reveal an interesting contrast because when asked about the actual 'things' that they wish to take away from the experience, they predominantly mention items or things with tangible results: a better professional standing which of course is accompanied by better pay and other benefits, a chance to further their studies and a degree which is something they actually obtain and hold in the form of the scroll.

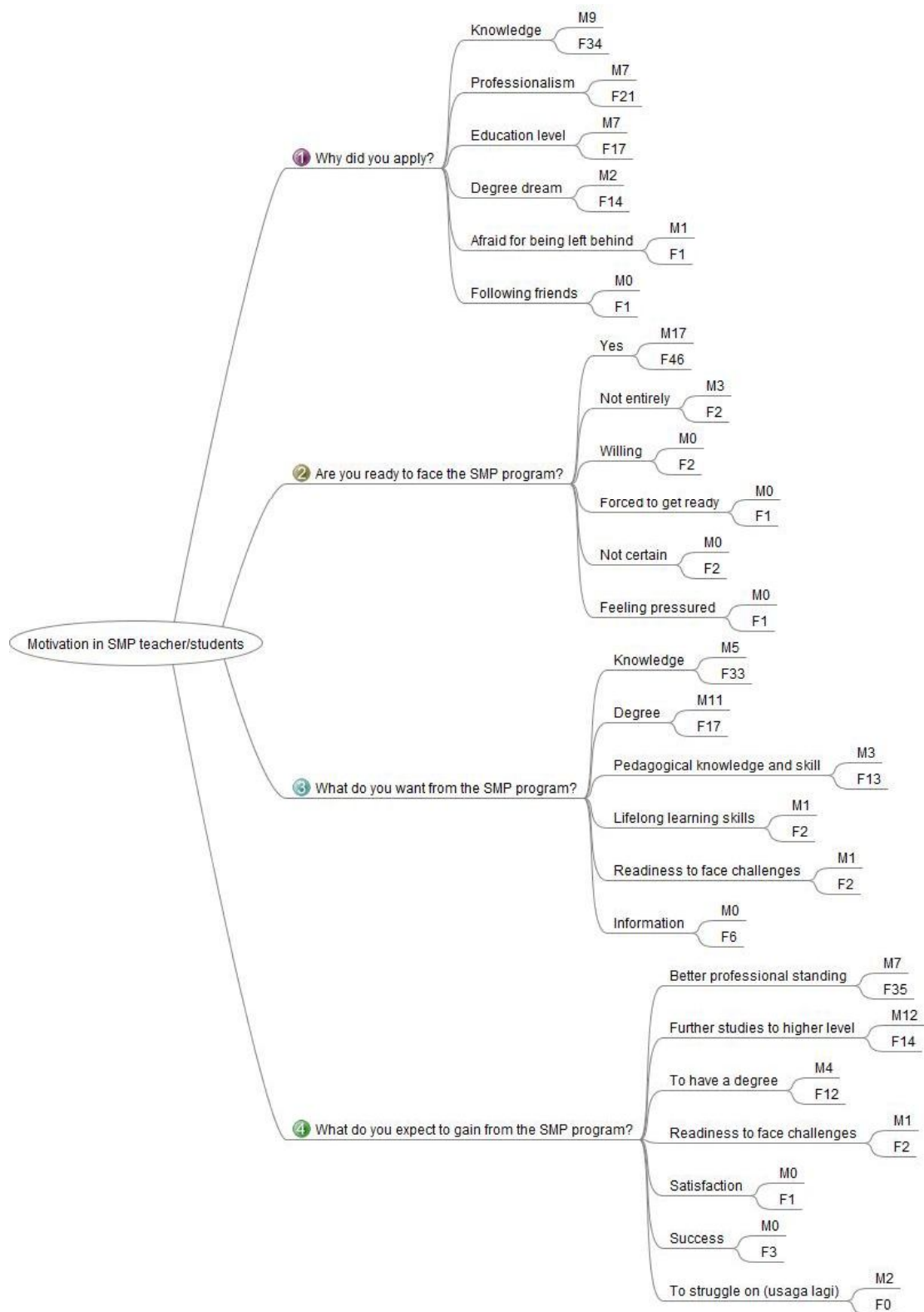


Figure 1: Findings - Visual

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the finding above we conclude that:

1. They enter the program with abstract intentions and motivations.
2. They can relate to the program concretely in the sense that it affects their lives, their work and their students.
3. More importantly, they are well capable of abstract intentions. Collectivistic society we may be but we are not devoid of abstraction.

These finding are interesting, particularly the final question, because they display a predominant preference for motivational “items” that are more abstract while the respondents all come from societies that are generally referred to as more concrete (terms used include collectivistic, high contact and others). They display a distinct preference for abstract items. This then opens up a avenue for further study of the respondents (in the group).

Reading

J.V. D’Cruz & William Steele. 2000. *Australia’s Ambivalence Towards Asia: Politics, Neo/Post-colonialism and Fact/Fiction*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

- i The program has sub groups: Phase 1 (2006-2009) main group are in-service teachers aged 45 and below, Phase 1B (2007 – 2009) are similar teachers but teaching in the Pedalaman (interior) schools categorized as P1, P2 and P3, Phase 2 (2011-) are similar teachers but offered full-scholarships and Phase 2B are a special intake of students between 45 to 47 of age. Both phases has 17 major subjects.
- ii Managed by the Bahagian Pendidikan Guru (Teacher Education Division) centered at Parcel E, Putrajaya.
- iii This particular intake was prompted by popular requests from several bodies including NGOs.
- iv The intakes up to 2009 were offered study loans whereas the intake from 2011 onwards are offered full-scholarships backed by contractual bonds.
- v Actual question: Mengapakah anda memohon dan mengambil program SMP?
- vi Actual question: Apakah anda bersedia untuk menghadapi bebanan dan tanggungjawab sebagai pelajar ODL dan guru sepenuh masa?
- vii Actual question: Apakah yang anda mahu dari program SMP ini?
- viii Actual question: Apakah yang anda harapkan setelah menjalani program SMP dengan jayanya?